

Union Square Zoning Amendments

Community Meeting

Mayor Joseph A. Curtatone

Alderman Maryann M. Heuston, Ward 2

Alderman Thomas F. Taylor, Ward 3



December 4, 2006

Acknowledgements

Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development

James Kostaras AIA, AICP; Executive Director

Joseph Merkel, Senior Planner

Alice Martin, Senior Planner

Chris Daveta, Project Manager

Somerville Arts Council

Gregory Jenkins, Executive Director

Union Square Main Streets

Mimi Grainey, Executive Director

Massachusetts Cultural Council

Department of Housing and Community Development

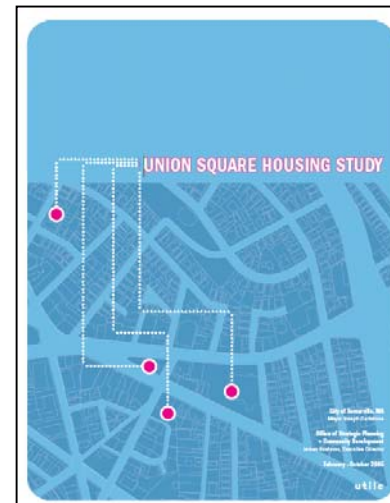
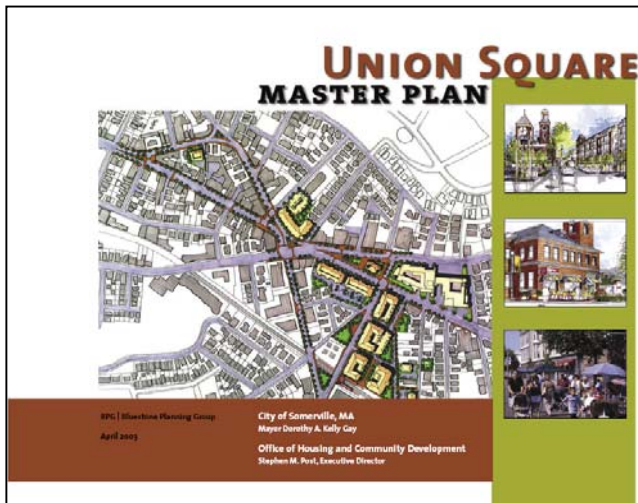
Momentum for Change

■ Previous Studies:

- Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area, 2002
- Transportation Plan, 2002
- Master Plan, 2003
- Housing Study, 2005

■ Zoning Study, 2005-2006:

- 18 Months
- Focus Groups Representing Stakeholders
- Artist Community Involvement
- Urban Design Studies
- Final Zoning Amendments



Strategy for Change

- **Current Business Development, Farmers Market, Performance Programs, Public Art (Main Streets and ArtsUnion)**
- **Green Line Extension**
- **Zoning Amendments**
 - PUD-C Overlay District
 - Arts Overlay District
- **District Improvement Financing**
- **Traffic Improvements**
- **Redevelop City Owned Parcels**



Presentation Organization

- **Union Square Yesterday**
- **Union Square Today**
- **Union Square Tomorrow's Vision**
- **Zoning Process**
- **Zoning Amendments**



History of Union Square

- You Have to **See** it to **Believe** it!
 - January 1, 1776: First American flag raised on Prospect Hill



History of Union Square

- You Have to **See** it to **Believe** it!
 - Trolley System
 - Successful District



History of Union Square

- You Have to **See** it to **Believe** it!
 - Grand Buildings
 - Neighborhood Retail



History of Union Square

- You Have to **See** it to **Believe** it!



History of Union Square

- **Dedensification**
 - Buildings shortened for insurance purposes
- **Introduction of the automobile and removal of transit (the streetcar system)**
 - Problematic traffic patterns
- **Disinvestment**
 - Economic Development drawn to Cambridge, Davis Square, and Interstate Corridors.



History of Union Square



Union Square Today – First Impressions

■ Assets

- Incredible diversity of businesses and establishments
- Beautiful and historic building stock
- Active Main Streets organization – Farmer's Market, Festivals, etc
- Vibrant Artist Community – ArtsUnion Furniture, Windows Art Project, etc
- Active and involved residential neighborhood

■ Liabilities

- Many historic buildings are run-down and in disrepair
- Community spaces are not as desirable as they could be
- Traffic Congestion and Flow concerns
- Numerous underutilized parcels of land in strategic locations



Union Square Today

- Density + Diversity
 - **Business District**



Union Square Today

- Density + Diversity
 - Business District
 - **Residential Community**



Union Square Today

- Density + Diversity
 - Business District
 - Residential Community
 - **Artist Community**



Union Square – Tomorrow's Vision

- You have to **Believe** it to **See** it!
- Somerville
Ave to the
East



Union Square – Tomorrow's Vision

- You have to **Believe** it to **See** it!
- Somerville Ave to the East



Union Square – Tomorrow's Vision

- You have to **Believe** it to **See** it!
- Somerville
Ave to the
Southeast



Union Square – Tomorrow's Vision

- You have to **Believe** it to **See** it!
- Somerville Ave to the Southeast



Union Square – Tomorrow's Vision

- You have to **Believe** it to **See** it!
- Prospect Street to the North



Union Square – Tomorrow's Vision

- You have to **Believe** it to **See** it!
- Prospect Street to the North



Union Square Zoning -Process

Previous Studies:

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 - Transportation Study, 2002
 - Master Plan, 2003

Union Square Zoning -Process

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**Municipal Property Housing
Study/ Zoning Study, 2005**

**ArtsUnion Zoning
Study, 2005**

**Draft
Zoning**

Union Square Zoning -Process

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Union Square Zoning -Process

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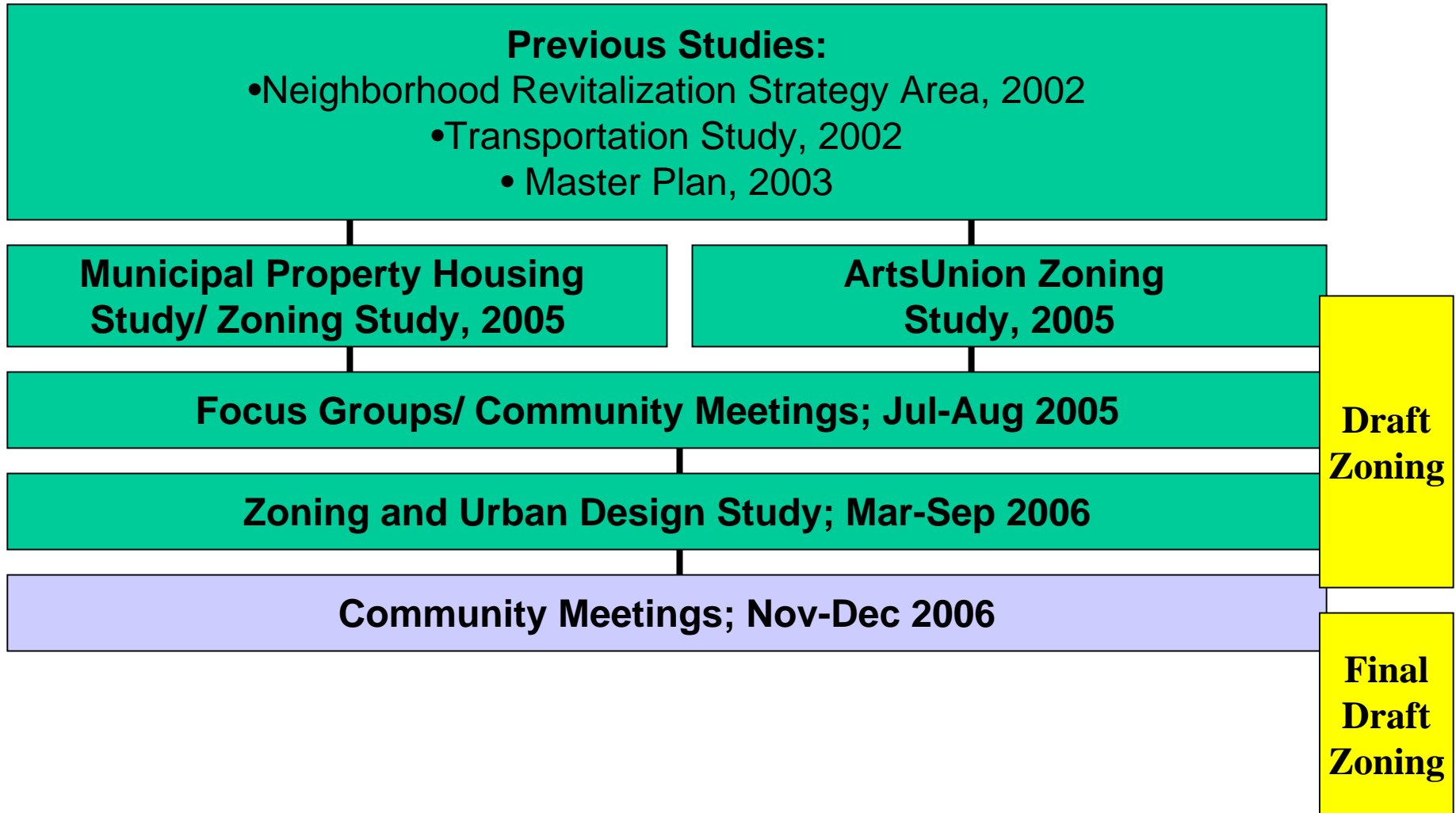
**ArtsUnion Zoning
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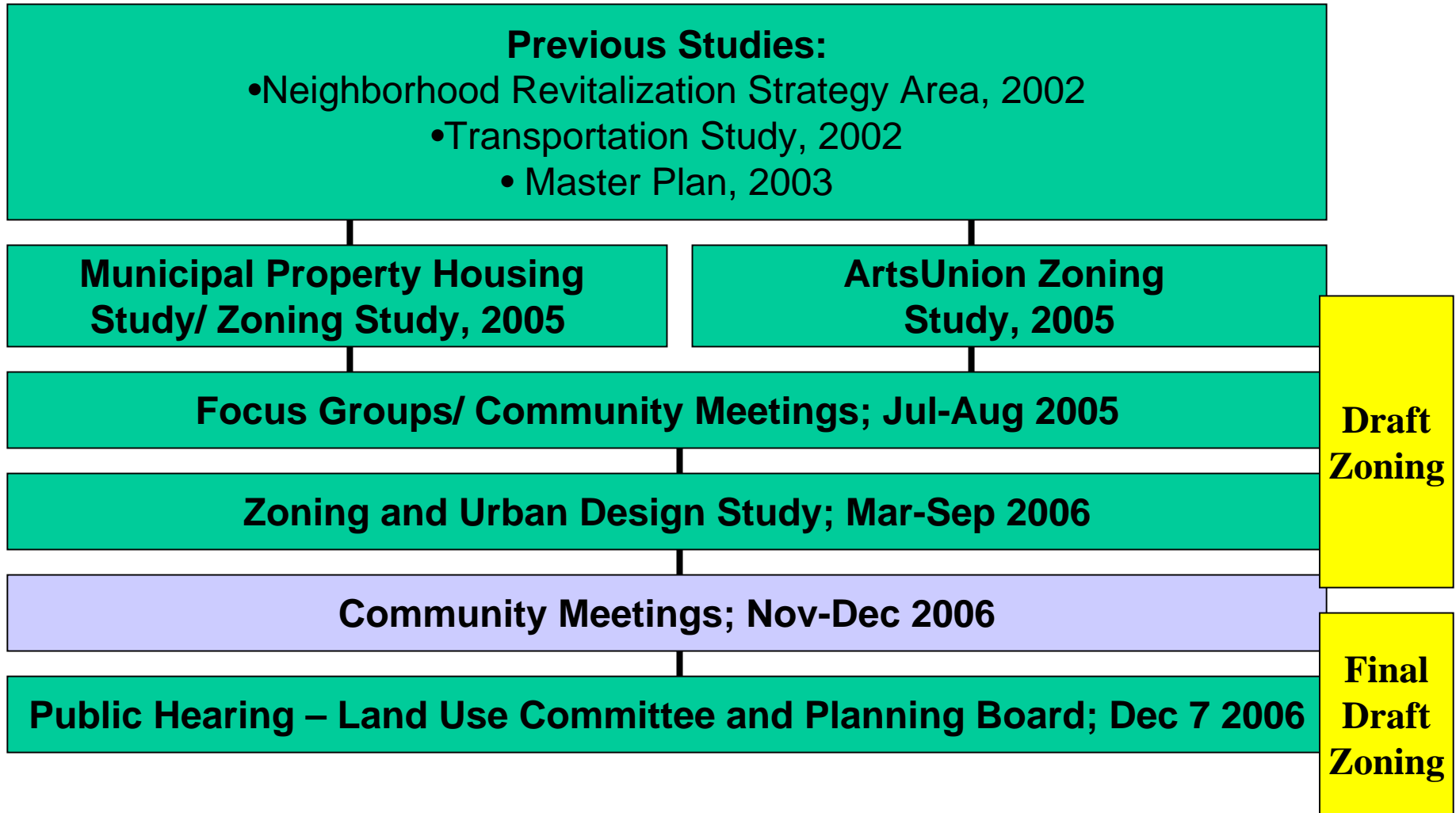
Zoning and Urban Design Study; Mar-Sep 2006

**Draft
Zoning**

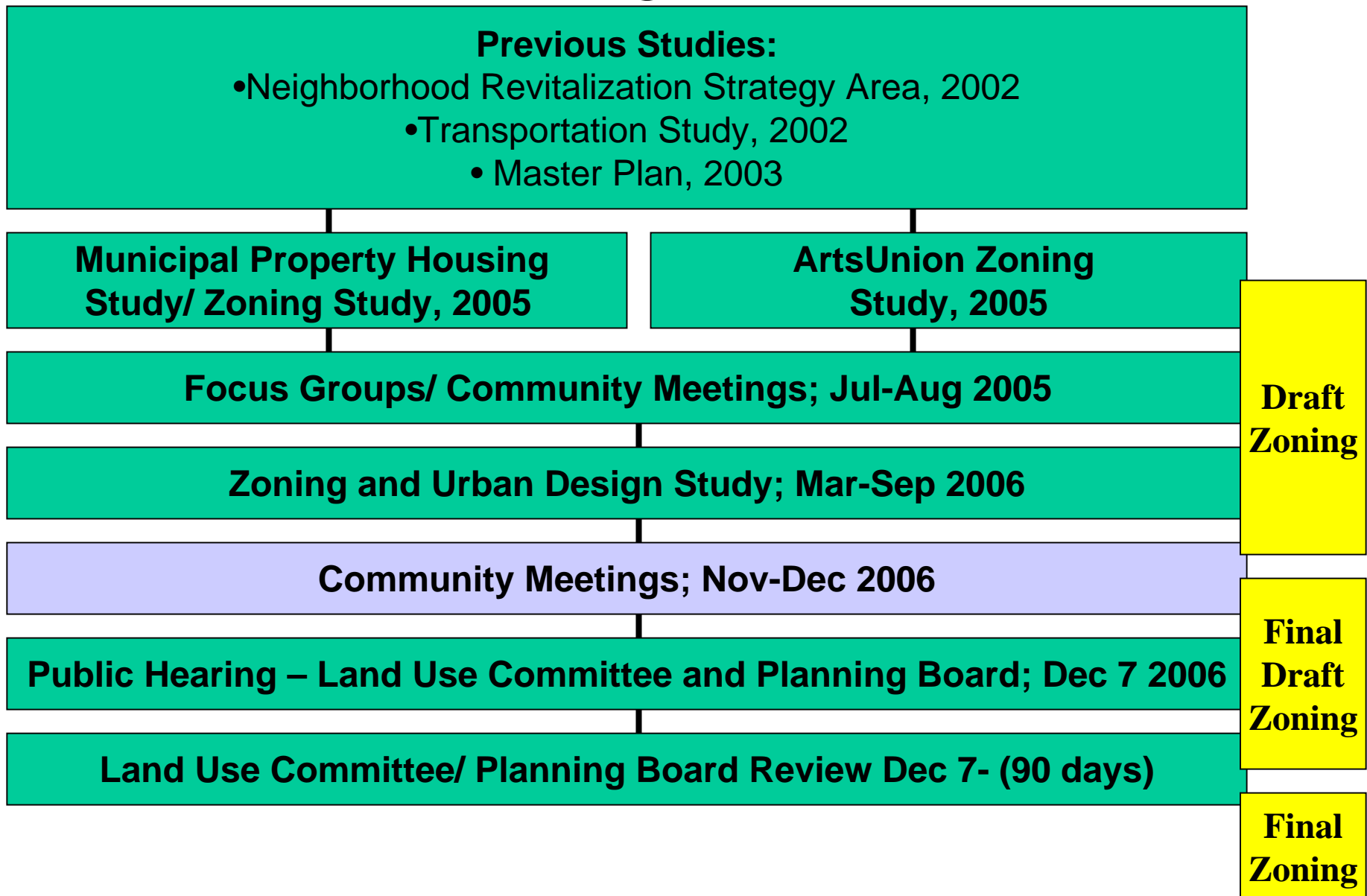
Union Square Zoning -Process



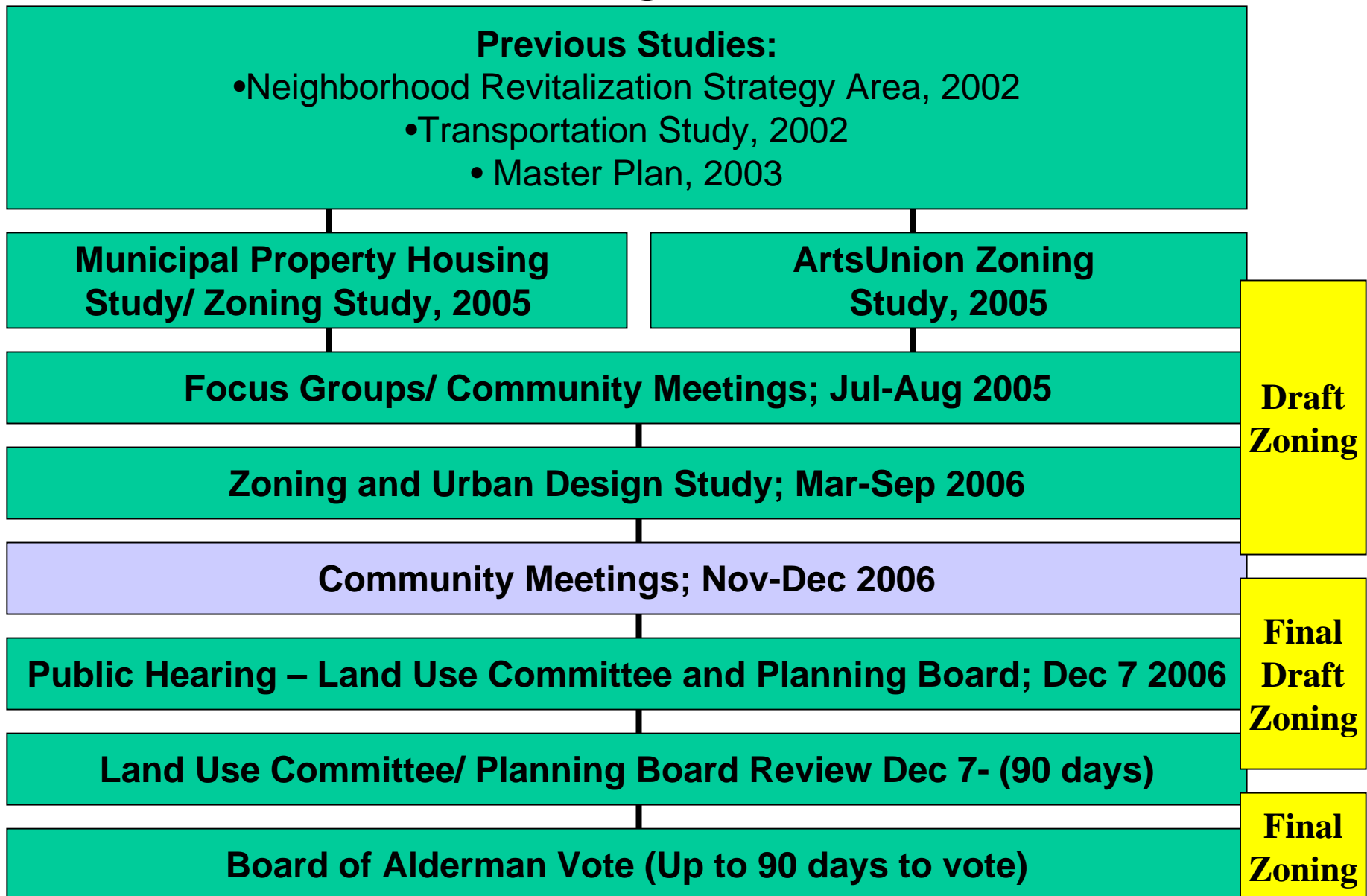
Union Square Zoning -Process



Union Square Zoning -Process

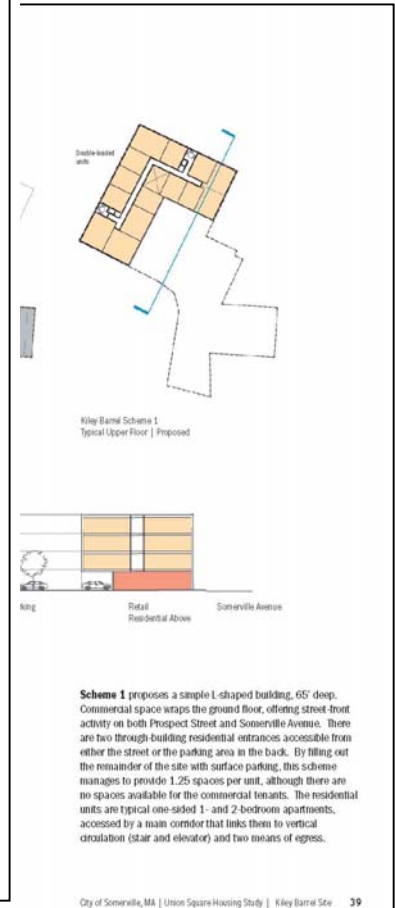
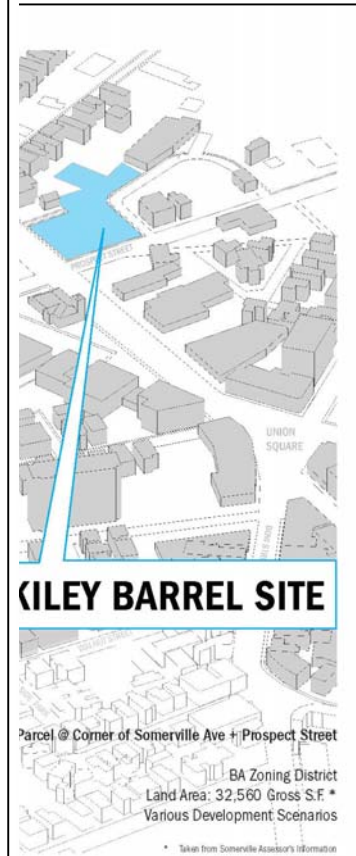
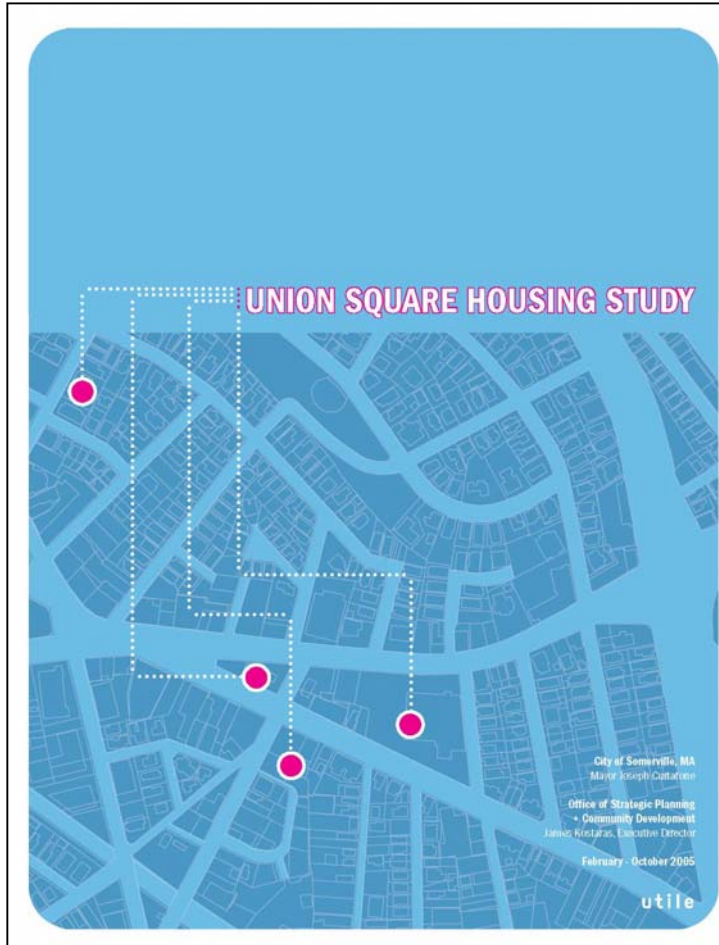


Union Square Zoning -Process



Union Square Zoning -Process

■ Municipal Property Housing/ Zoning Study



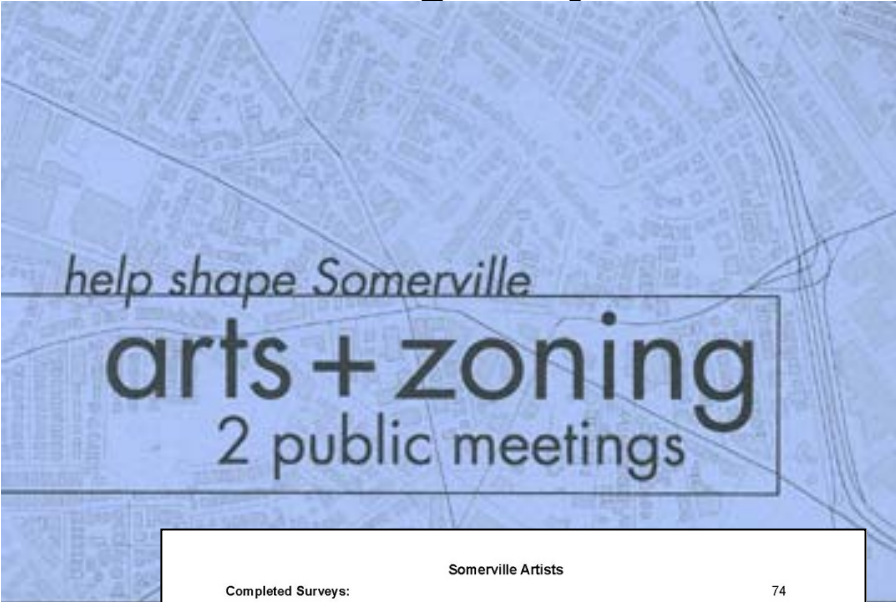
Scheme 1 proposes a simple L-shaped building, 65' deep. Commercial space wraps the ground floor, offering street-front activity on both Prospect Street and Somerville Avenue. There are two through-building residential entrances accessible from either the street or the parking area in the back. By filling out the remainder of the site with surface parking, this scheme manages to provide 1.25 spaces per unit, although there are no spaces available for the commercial tenants. The residential units are typical one-sided 1- and 2-bedroom apartments, accessed by a main corridor that links them to vertical circulation (stair and elevator) and two means of egress.

Union Square Zoning -Process

ArtsUnion Zoning Study



DRAFT ZONING



| Somerville Artists | | | |
|--|-----------------------------|--------|--|
| Completed Surveys: | 74 | | |
| First Response Date: | Tuesday, September 20, 2005 | | |
| Last Response Date: | Tuesday, October 04, 2005 | | |
| <hr/> | | | |
| 1. How long have you considered yourself a Somerville artist? | | | |
| (Free text answer) | 74 | 100% | |
| Total Respondents: | | 74 | |
| <hr/> | | | |
| 2. What is your medium/media? | | | |
| (Free text answer) | 73 | 100% | |
| Total Respondents: | | 73 | |
| <hr/> | | | |
| 3. Do you feel there should be some criteria qualifying someone as an artist as it relates to "artist housing"? | | | |
| Yes, and there should be an application and approval process derived from a committee comprised of local artists and city representatives. | 47 | 63.51% | |
| No because it might exclude "hobby" artists and others | 5 | 6.76% | |
| No because it will provide no benefit to artists | 3 | 4.05% | |
| Other: | 19 | 25.68% | |
| Total Respondents: | | 74 | |
| <hr/> | | | |
| 4. Would you like to see city assistance in navigating the process of permitting and zoning? | | | |
| Yes | 65 | 91.55% | |
| No | 6 | 8.45% | |

*PUD-C and Arts Overlay zoning text -- page 1
J. Wickersham REDRAFT 2/6/06 redlined v. 1/18/06 draft*

AN AMENDMENT ESTABLISHING A PUD-C ZONING OVERLAY DISTRICT AND AN ARTS OVERLAY DISTRICT FOR UNION SQUARE

Whereas Union Square includes a number of large vacant or underutilized parcels with development potential; and

Whereas economic development is a priority for the City of Somerville in general and the Union Square area in particular, to create jobs, tax revenue, and otherwise improve the quality of life; and

Whereas there is a critical shortage of housing for all income levels in both Somerville and the Greater Boston area; and

Whereas improved transit service is anticipated in Union Square in the near future because the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has recently agreed to fulfill its promise to construct Green Line rapid transit service to Somerville, including Union Square/Boylston Yards; and

Whereas the City of Somerville is home to one of the highest concentrations of artists of any American city, with a particular concentration around Union Square; and

Whereas additional mixed-use development in Union Square will support existing businesses and the arts community in Union Square and create much-needed tax revenue for the City; and

Whereas there is a critical shortage of housing for all income levels in both Somerville and the Greater Boston area; and

Whereas commercial development in Union Square and elsewhere in the City will benefit from increased residential density in the surrounding area; and

Whereas the viability of new transit service to Union Square will benefit from increased residential density in the vicinity of the new Green Line station; and

ARTS SURVEY

Union Square Zoning Amendment Summary – Goal #1

- **Goal #1:** Citywide, support the creation of live/work and work-only Artists Studios
- **The Challenge:** Uncertainty whether artists studios are an allowed use
- **Recommendations:** Clarifying Entitlements to Create Artists Studios

Union Square Zoning Amendment

Summary – Goal #2

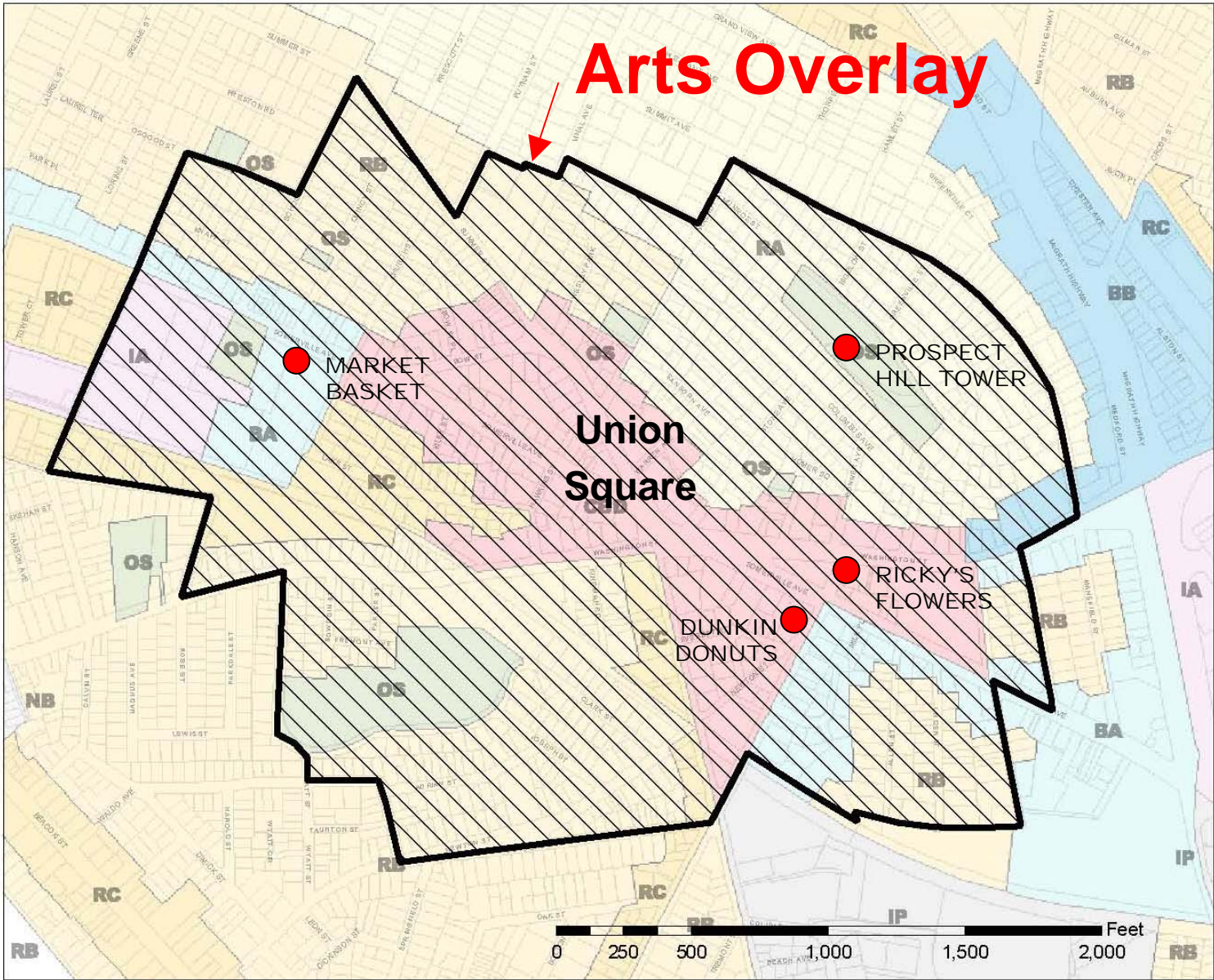
- **Goal #2:** Create Incentives for high-density housing with arts-related benefits on key Union Square Development Parcels, through PUD-C Overlay District
- **The Challenge:** Insufficient incentives for the redevelopment of key under-utilized parcels
- **Recommendations:** Provide density and height bonuses for PUD-C projects, contingent on the creation of affordable housing and arts-related uses

Union Square Zoning Amendment

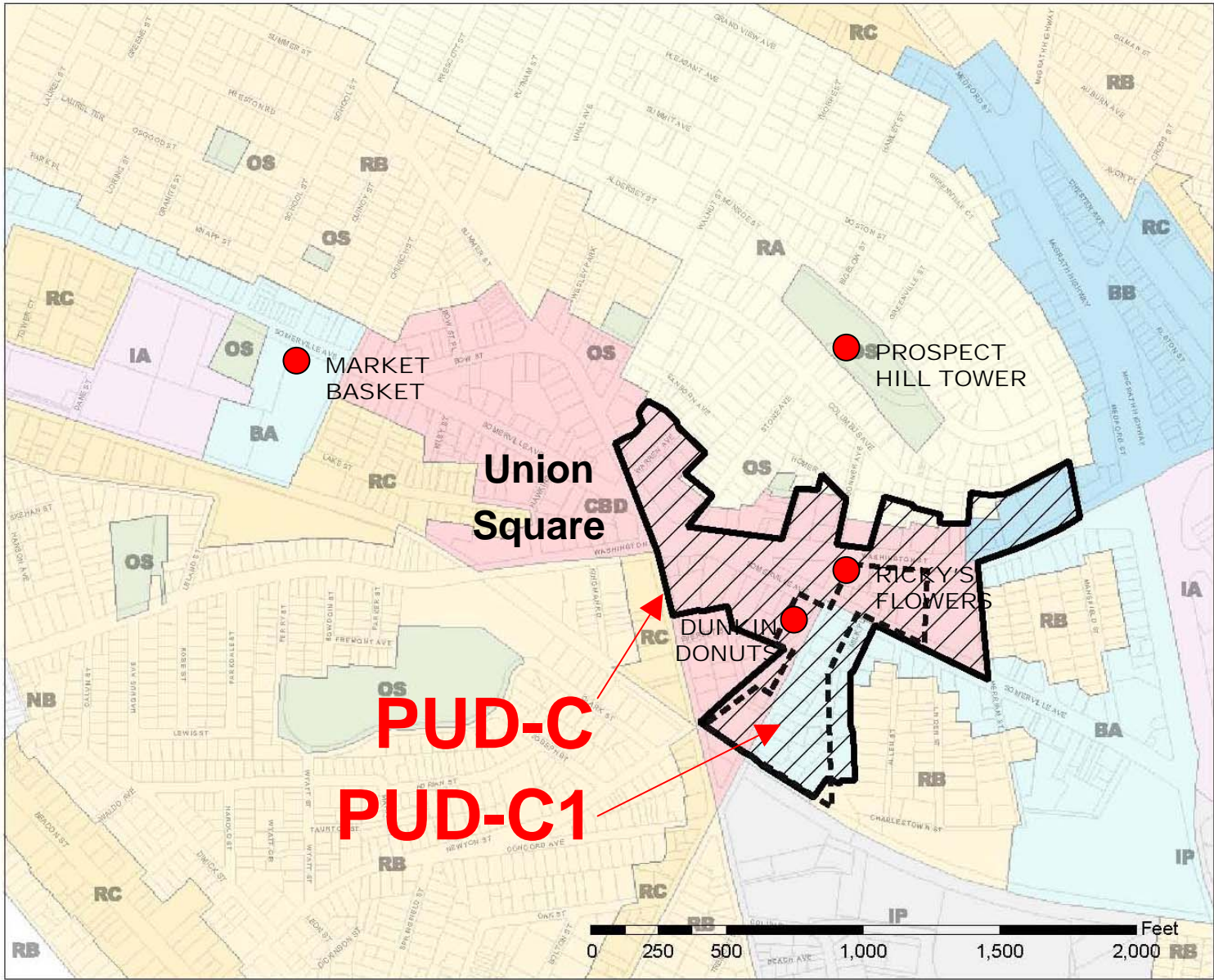
Summary – Goal #3

- **Goal #3:** Support Arts-related Uses in Union Square through creation of Arts Overlay District
- **The First Challenge:** Multiple zoning districts with inconsistent standards
- **Recommendations:** Make standards for art-related uses consistent throughout the new Arts Overlay District
- **The Second Challenge:** No incentives for conversion of existing buildings and redevelopment of infill lots; Unrealistic parking requirements discourage reuse of existing buildings
- **Recommendations:** Provide incentives for the development of Artists Housing; don't require increased parking for reuse of existing buildings

Union Square Arts Overlay District

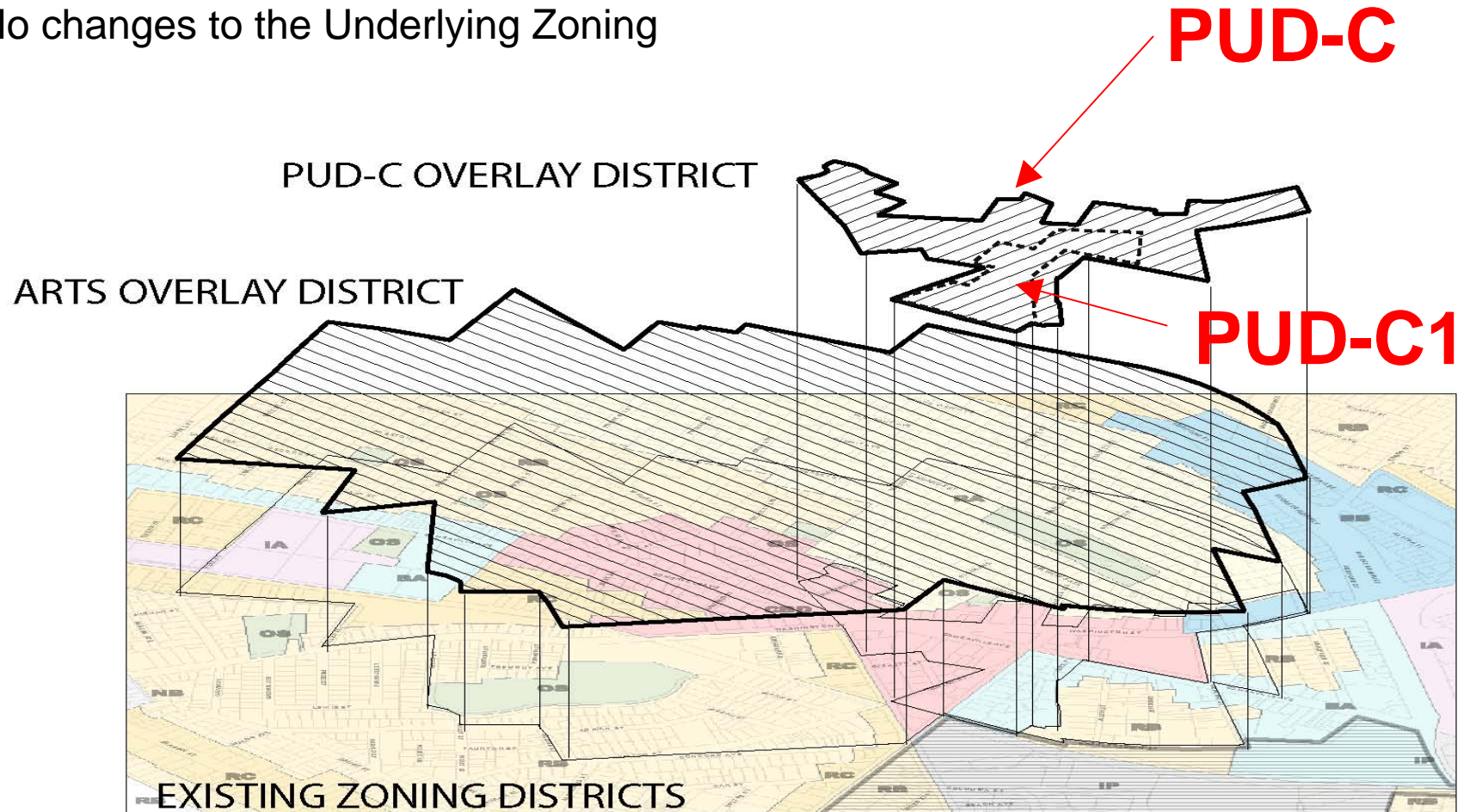


Union Square PUD-C Overlay District



Union Square Zoning Amendment

- New “Layers” of Zoning
- Different Rules for Each “Layer”
- No changes to the Underlying Zoning

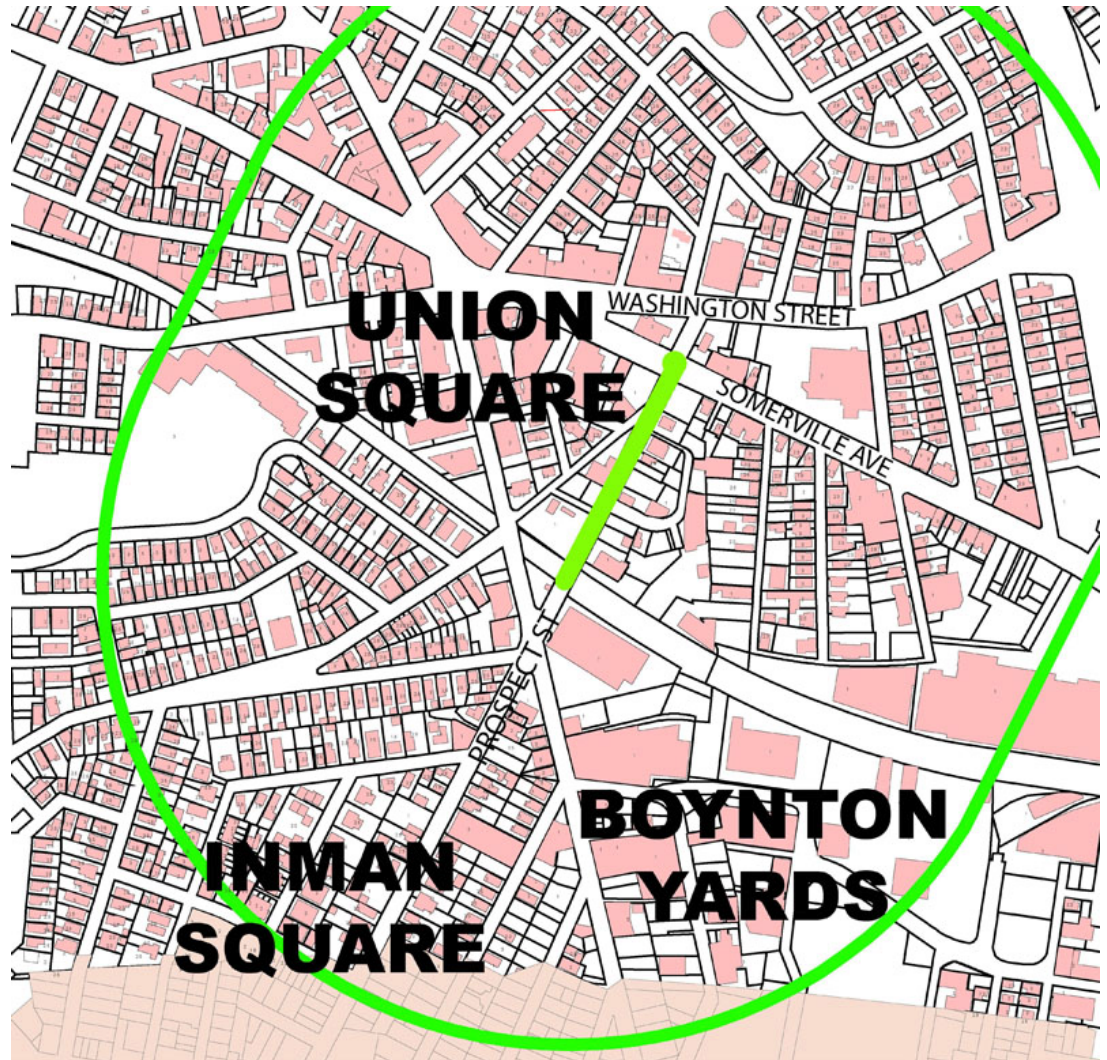


Union Square Zoning -Process

Testing the Zoning and Urban Design

Regional Map of
Union Square,
Boynton Yards,
and Inman Square

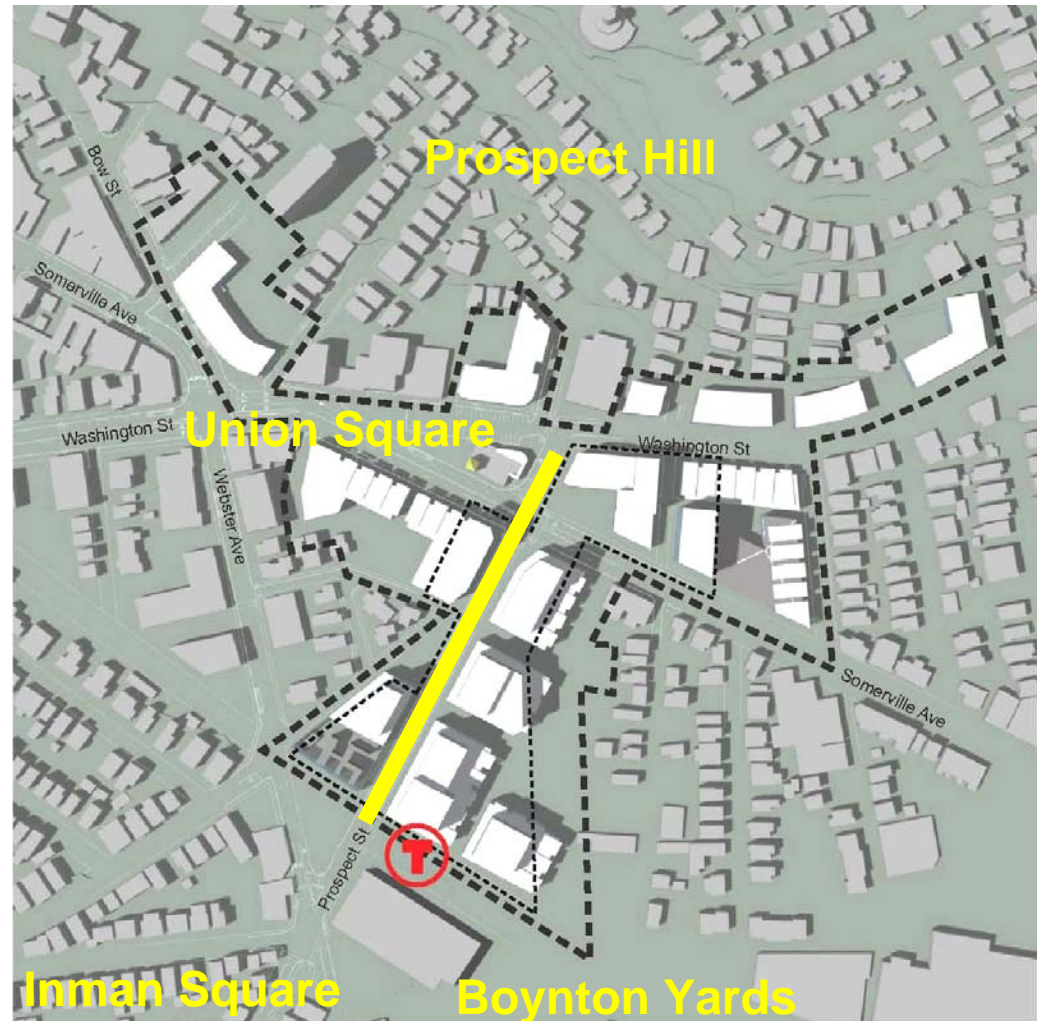
Showing 5 Minute
Walking Radius from
PUD-C1



Union Square Zoning -Process

Testing the Zoning and Urban Design

- **Development on Under-Utilized Parcels Only**
- **Avoid Residential Parcels in PUD Zoning**
- **Keep Density Near Proposed Transit**
- **Maintain 4-Story Height Limits throughout the Square**
- **Introduce 12-Story only at Specific Sites:**
 - Near Transit
 - Buffered from Residential
 - Clustered
 - Minimize Impact to Views



Union Square Zoning -Process

Testing the Zoning and Urban Design

- Utilize Small Profile When Viewed from Prospect Hill
- Increase Value by Utilizing View Corridors
- Strengthen Corridors between Strong Communities
 - Union Square
 - Prospect Hill
 - Boynton Yards
 - Inman Square

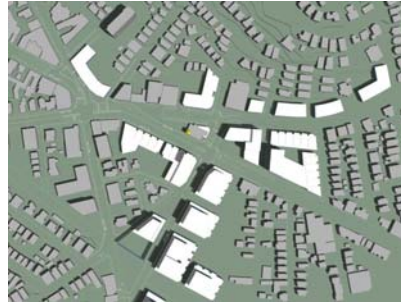


Union Square Zoning -Process

Shadow Study



March 20 AM



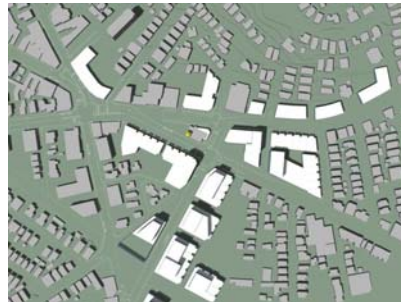
June 20 AM



Dec 20 AM



March 20 NOON



June 20 NOON



Dec 20 NOON



March 20 PM



June 20 PM



Dec 20 PM

Union Square Zoning -Process

Shadow Study



March 20 Noon

Union Square Zoning -Process

Shadow Study



June 20 Noon

Union Square Zoning -Process

Shadow Study



June 20 Noon

Union Square Zoning -Process

Views from Prospect Hill

Existing View – Prospect Hill Tower Looking Southeast



Union Square Zoning -Process

Views from Prospect Hill

3D-Model Overlay – Prospect Hill Tower Looking Southeast



Union Square Zoning -Process

Views from Prospect Hill

Existing View – Prospect Hill Tower Looking South



Union Square Zoning -Process

Views from Prospect Hill

3D-Model Overlay – Prospect Hill Tower Looking South



Union Square Zoning -Process

Views from Prospect Hill

Existing View - Bonner Ave Looking South



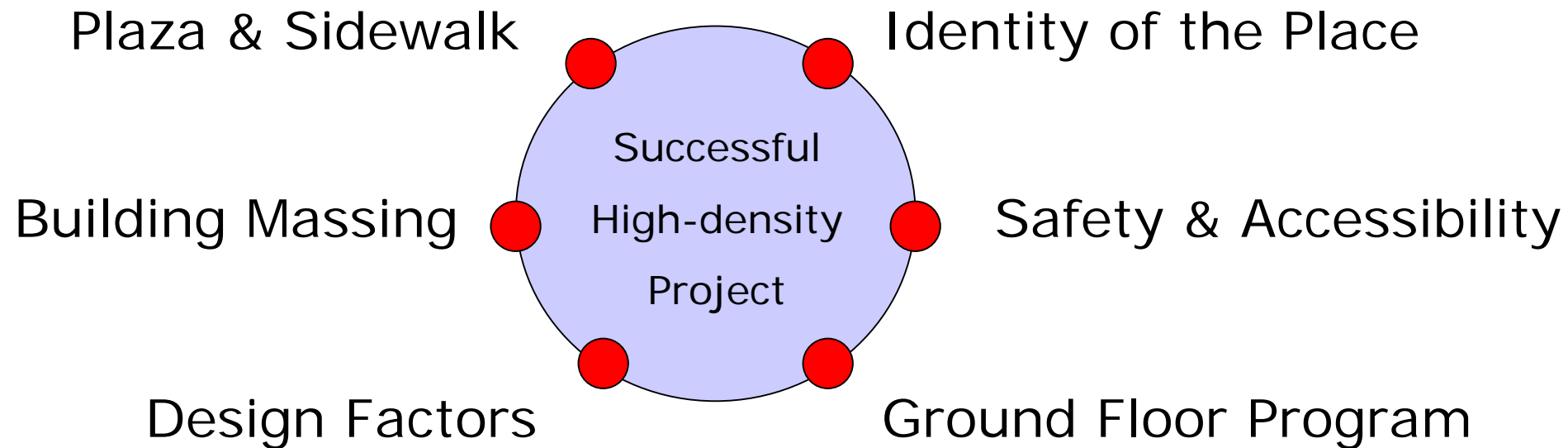
Union Square Zoning -Process

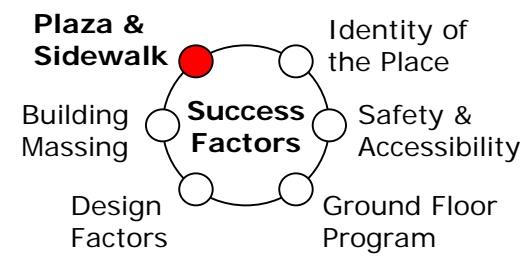
Views from Prospect Hill

3D-Model Overlay - Bonner Ave Looking South



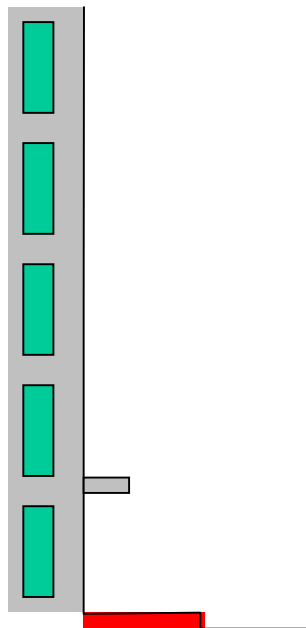
What make Success in High-density Urban Squares?



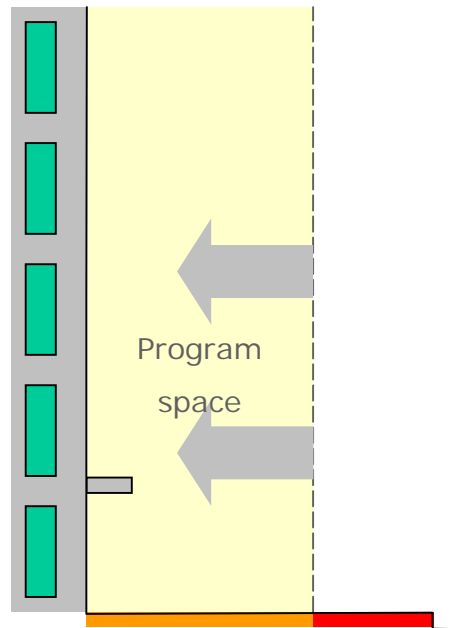


Success Factors in Urban Squares

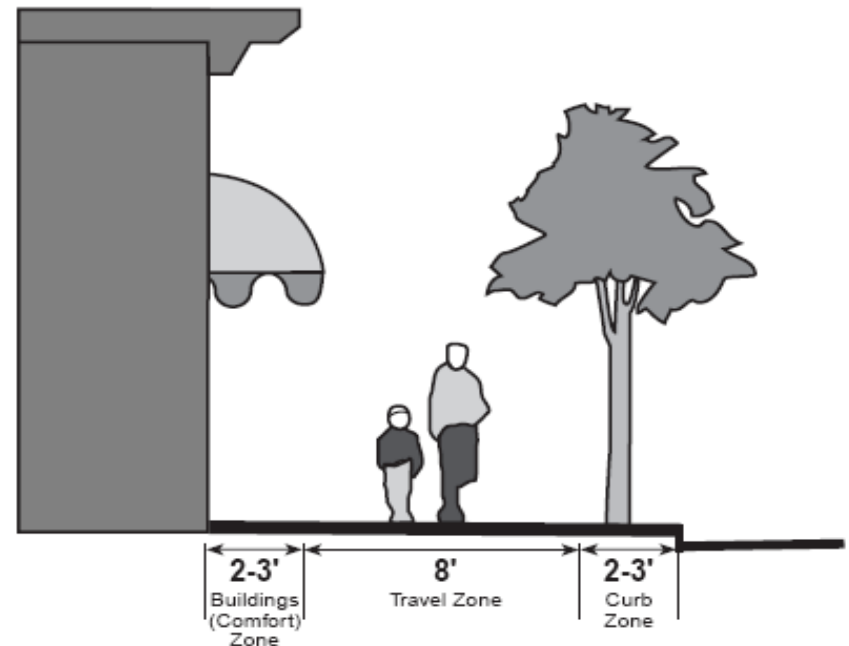
1. Sidewalk and Plaza



Sidewalk

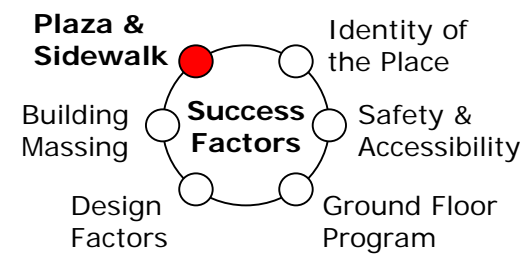


Program Space / Sidewalk



Typical Sidewalk Width: 12-14 feet wide

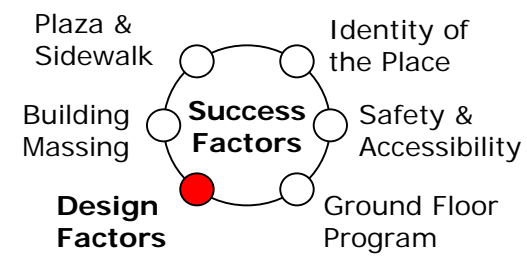
- Well-designed plaza (program space) and sidewalk make the place more liable and attractive. People walk slow, stay, talk, and buy in a beautiful plaza and sidewalk.



Success Factors in Urban Squares

1. Sidewalk and Plaza



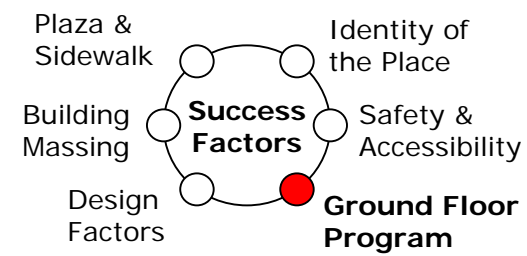


Success Factors in Urban Squares

3. Design Factors



- **Properly adapted** design factors such as landscaping, paving patterns, seating area, store-fronts, sun-shelter, display windows, and entrances make the scene of the ground floor more comfortable and friendly.

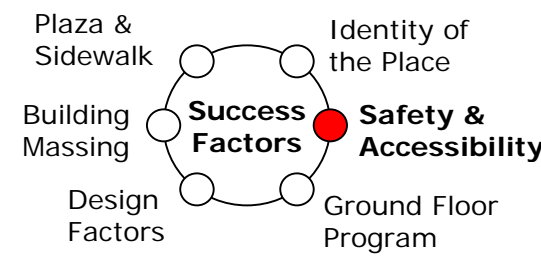


Success Factors in Urban Squares

4. Ground Floor Program



- Successful ground floor program such as restaurants, café, and retail shops generates pedestrian-friendly atmosphere of the abutting sidewalk and reduce the presence from the high-density building.

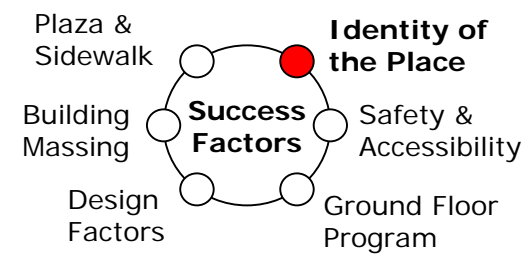


Success Factors in Urban Squares

5. Safety and Accessibility



- Accessibility to the project is determined by the location, transportation modes, parking facilities, and walking path.
- Safety of the project is determined by the accessibility, ground floor program, and street lamp.



Success Factors in Urban Squares

6. Identity of the Place

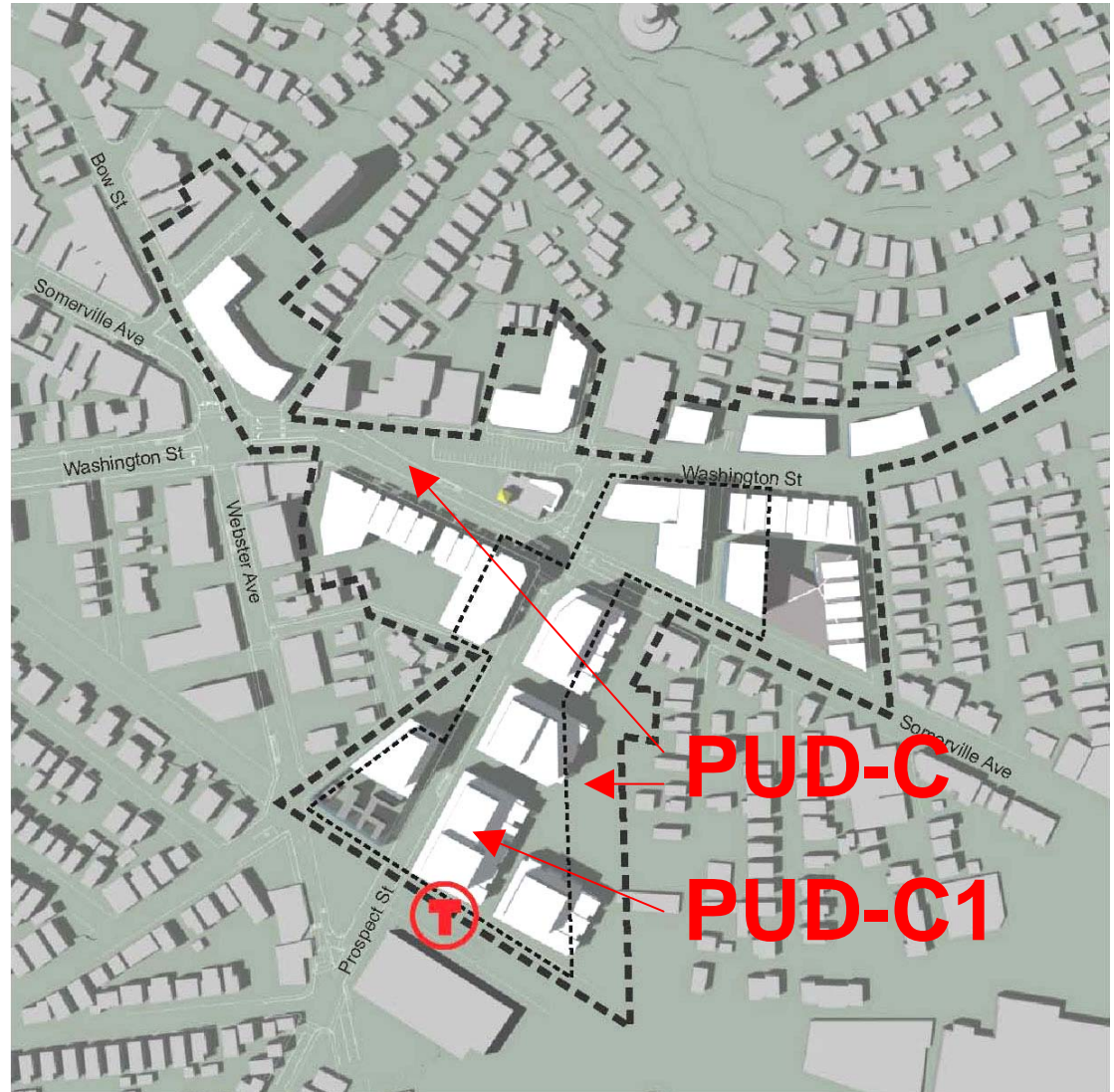


- **Successful high-rise buildings** should reflect the scale, building uses, and design of the surrounding neighborhood.
- At the same time, high-rise buildings should be local landmark.

Union Square Zoning Amendments

Zoning Capacity #1

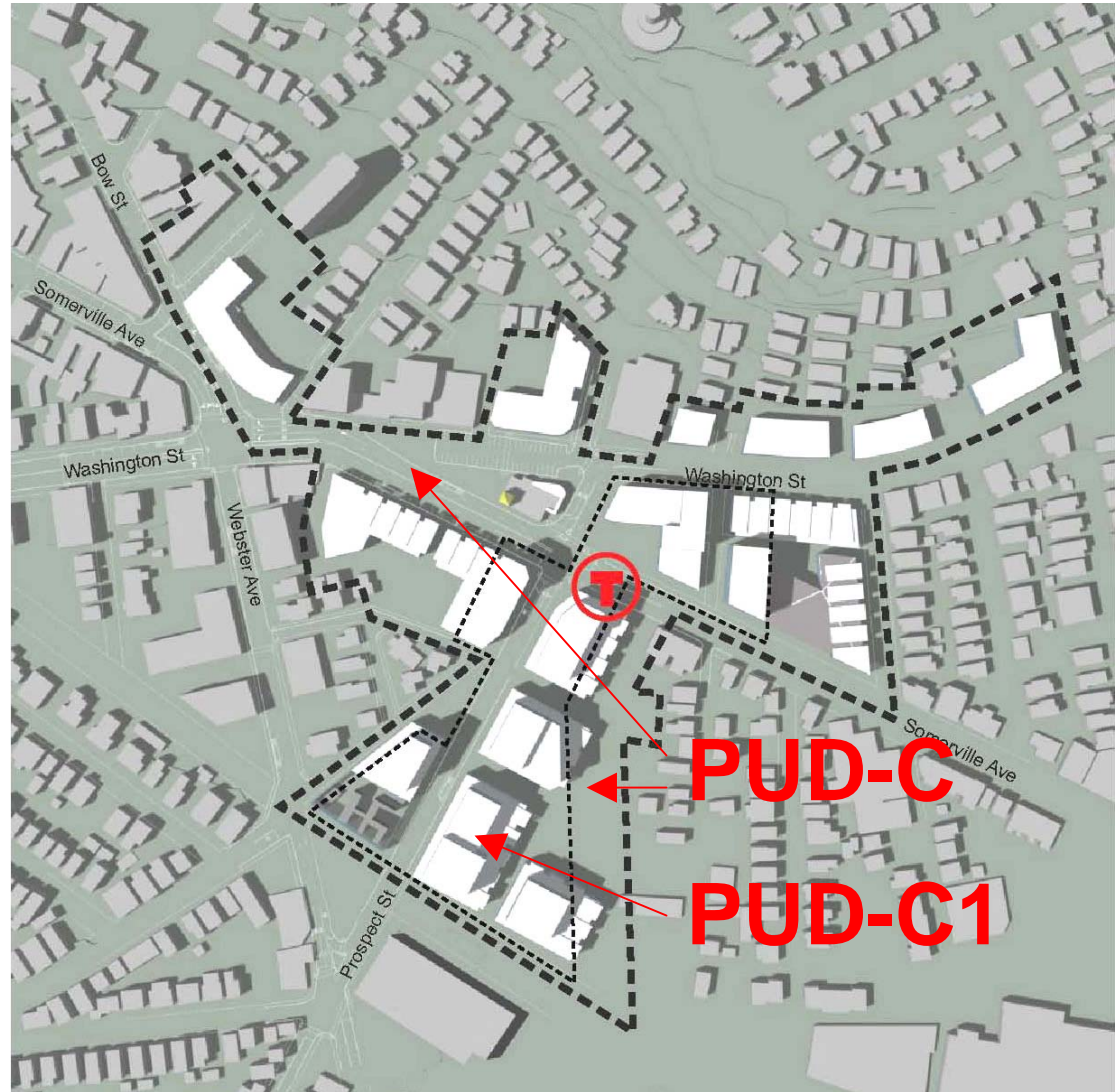
- **Total Mixed-Use Dev.**
 - (1,577,000 SF)
- **Commercial Development**
 - 40% of Development
 - 631,000 SF
- **Residential Development.**
 - (789 Units)
- **Inclusionary Residential**
 - (95 Units)
 - (47 Units may be Live Work)
- **Improved + 2 Additional Acres of Open Space**



Union Square Zoning Amendments

Zoning Capacity #2

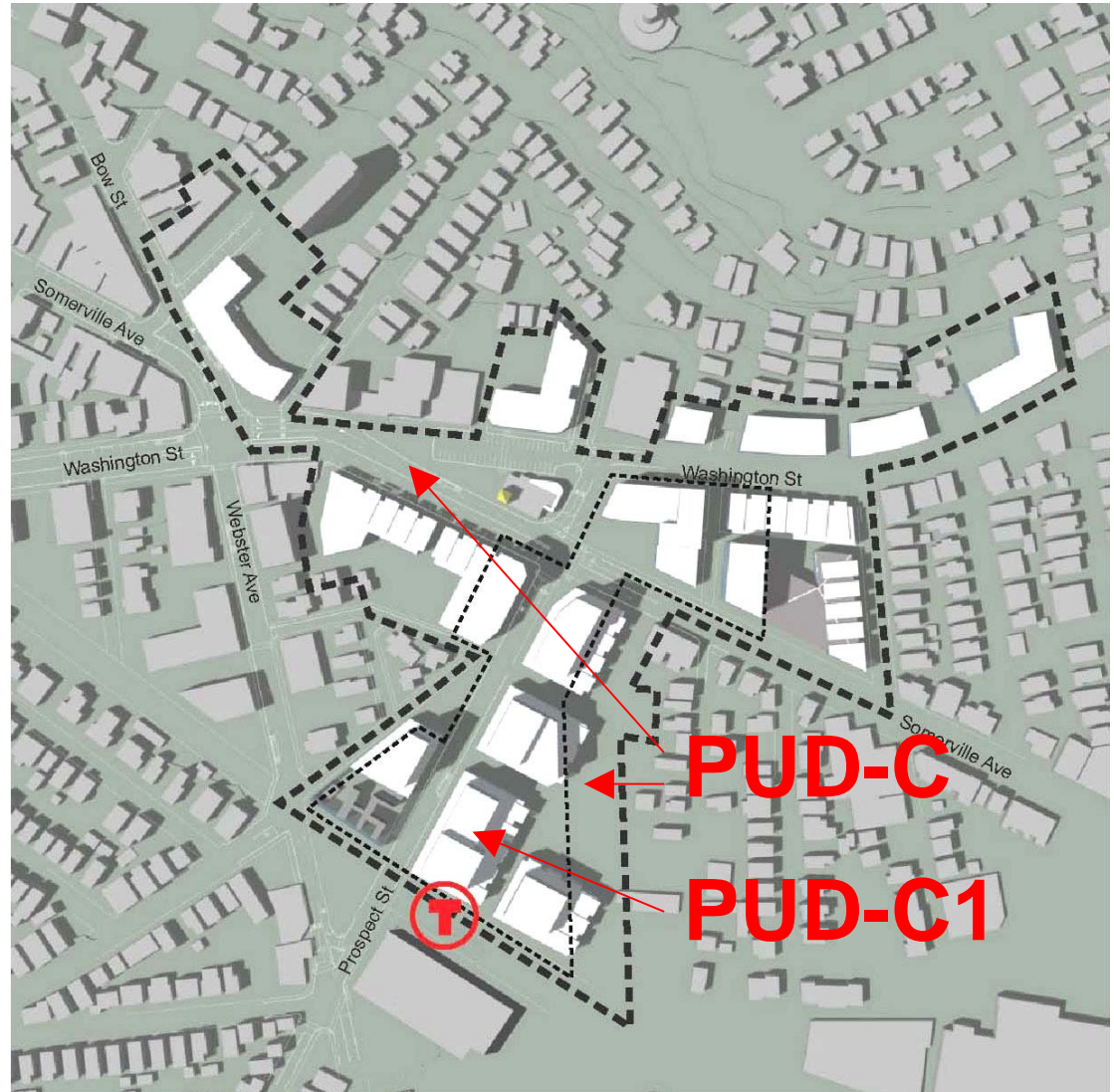
- **Total Mixed-Use Dev.**
 - (1,577,000 SF)
- **Commercial Development**
 - 50% of Development
 - 788,900 SF
- **Residential Development.**
 - (657 Units @1200SF Avg)
- **Inclusionary Residential**
 - (79 Units)
 - (39 Units may be Live Work)
- **Improved + 2 Additional Acres of Open Space**



Union Square Zoning Amendments

Zoning Capacity #3

- **Total Mixed-Use Dev.**
 - (1,577,000 SF)
- **Commercial Development**
 - 60% of Development
 - 946,700 SF
- **Residential Development.**
 - (657 Units @1200SF Avg)
- **Inclusionary Residential**
 - (63 Units)
 - (32 Units may be Live Work)
- **Improved + 2 Additional Acres of Open Space**



Break Out Session

How can we use the proposed zoning to meet the following goals?

- **Business:** Create a vibrant Neighborhood Business District.
- **The Arts:** Transform Union Square into a center for Somerville's community artists.
- **Housing:** Build housing for a diverse community of Somerville residents in Union Square.
- **Historic Preservation:** Preserve historic architecture in Union Square; encourage contemporary new architecture that maintains the integrity of historic buildings in Union Square.
- **Transportation:** Transform Union Square into a model Transit-Oriented Development district
- **Urban Design:** Design beautiful streets, sidewalks and urban plazas in Union Square for pedestrians.

Next Steps

- **Public Hearing December 7th**
- **Land Use Committee and Planning Board Review**
- **Planning Board Recommendations**
- **Land Use Committee sponsor to Board of Aldermen**
- **BOA Vote and Adoption of Zoning Amendments**
- **Transportation Review and Plans**
- **District Improvement Finance**
- **Green Line Studies**